



Armed Robbery Prevention

Presented by: Carlsbad Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit
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Apart from terrorist attacks, armed robbery is the form of retail crime most likely to cause long-term physical and/or psychological harm for employees and customers alike. The following advice has been prepared to help businesses minimize the threat of armed robbery and maximize the chances of apprehending the offenders.

Preventing Armed Robbery

Consult a security specialist

1. Limit cash and publicize the fact - The less cash held on the premises, the less attractive it is as a target. Keep a float of under \$100 if possible.
2. Deposit money in banks or secure holding units frequently. Keep money out of sight. Use a cash drop box with a time delay lock and advertise this with a sign. Time controlled vaults reduce the opportunity for theft.
3. Never count cash in view of customers. Don't advertise your profits: never flash a large roll of bills. If you count money at night, make sure the premises are secured and you are not visible from outside.
4. Never discuss takings in public.
5. Locate a cash register where it can be seen by passers-by to increase the likelihood of identifying the robber.
6. Avoid routine: if staff transports cash, do not establish a routine, and do not let them wear a uniform identifying the business. Vary routes.
7. Provide credit facilities and reduce the amount of cash you need to hold. Electronic Fund Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS) is one example.
8. Robbers may tender large bills specifically to find out where you keep them.

Layout of premises

- a. Open environment: An open and uncluttered environment which provides a clear, well-lit view of the sales area from outside is a deterrent to armed robbers. Walk-ways and displays should be low and angled to allow surveillance by the clerk.
- b. Rear access: Any rear access should be fully secured with strong locks, and illuminated lanes leading to premises. Rear access door should be equipped with a viewer.
- c. Front Façade: Minimize curtains, posters and advertising materials which obscure vision, as they provide cover for robbers. Fifty percent of the front façade should provide an open and unobstructed view.

- d. Doors and windows: All exterior doors should be of solid construction with good quality locks.
- e. Counters: Customers do not belong behind counters. People are creatures of habit and will almost always stand in the same spot in front of the counter. This is a good spot in which to focus a camera.
- f. Design counters to maximize space between staff and customers. Deep counters with raised floors behind make it difficult for offenders to assault staff.
- g. Surveillance cameras: Though they may not deter robbers, surveillance cameras help in their apprehension. Make sure they are well maintained, serviced regularly and advertised.
- h. Lighting: Making the target highly visible increases the chances of identifying the offender.
- i. Mirrors: Mirrors allow staff to monitor otherwise blind spots, but make sure they don't allow offenders to see behind the counter.
- j. Electronic door sensors: These can alert staff that customers are entering or leaving the premises.
- k. Remote panic buttons: Remote panic buttons that can be attached to a clerk are an option for higher risk businesses like liquor stores.

Staff training

1. Vigilance: Staff should note any suspicious behavior and report it to the police.
2. Be careful about personal name tags, especially with surnames, as this can place staff at risk after a robbery.
3. New staff: When selecting new staff, ask for references and check them.
4. When staff leaves: Make sure you get keys back. If keys are missing, change the locks. If staff leave under difficult or strange circumstances, it may be wise to change locks, safe combinations and even cash-handling procedures.

During an armed robbery, adopt the following tactics:

1. Do precisely as you are told, and no more
2. Avoid eye contact with the robber
3. Speak only when spoken to
4. Tell the robber exactly what you are doing
5. Make no sudden movements
6. Don't activate alarms unless it is safe to do so
7. Try to remain calm and control your emotions; and remember as many details as possible about the bandit and the incident

Maximize chances of prosecution

1. Ensure that staff is trained to act appropriately after an armed robbery.
2. Activate the alarm as soon as it is safe to do so.

3. Phone the police immediately; give name and address of premises, area and location including nearest cross street; number of offenders and description; description of weapon used; description of vehicle used and direction of travel.
4. Make sure you call the police before you call anyone else.

Preserving the crime scene: After an armed robbery, do the following.

1. Close the premises to the public and keep out unauthorized people.
2. Isolate the area for later forensic examination, in particular fingerprints.
3. Keep staff away from areas the offender was in, places he/she may have touched, and any articles left behind, such as a note.
4. Get staff to independently note down a description of the offender and the words used in the crime. First impressions are vital.
5. Give police all details, even those which seem insignificant to you.

Identifying the offender: Any small detail may help the police apprehend the offender

Physical appearance:

1. Height
2. Age
3. Build
4. Coloring
5. Hair
6. Tattoos, scars, prominent or unusual features
7. Clothing

Behavior: speech, accents, language used

1. Nicknames
2. Actions/interactions with other offenders
3. Other aspects: weapons used; method of escape; vehicles used for escape; direction of travel when escaping

To produce a computerized facial identification, police specialists may ask you to describe the following parts of the face:

1. Hair (length and style),
2. Forehead and ears eyes and eyebrows (shape) nose (length and shape)
3. Mouth (width and shape)
4. Chin (length and shape).
5. Use a reference point in the store to determine the offender's height, for example, some shelves or mark on the wall.